

OPEN UP THE MORGUE!

How Press Photo Archives are Enabling a New History of Photojournalism

2 July 2021

LIVESTREAM PROGRAMME STARTS AT 10.15 CEST / AMSTERDAM TIME

PROGRAMME

10.15-10.20 Taco Dibbits
Welcome

10.20-10.30 Mattie Boom
Introduction

Session 1 Moderated by Thomas Smits

10.30-10.45 Elwin Hendrikse
Documenting The New Nation: Henri Cartier-Bresson in Indonesia

10.45-11.00 Gaia Salvatori
Photographs in print. Twentieth-Century Neapolitan Photojournalistic Archives: Production and Reception

11.00-11.15 Panel and Q&A

11.15-11.45 Break

Session 2 Moderated by Mattie Boom

11.45- 12.00 Marie-Eve Bouillon
Archiving Le Monde's image practices (1980-2000) in the National Archives of France

12.00-12.15 Eva Kraus & Regina Retter
How to digitize 15 million press photos: The analogue STERN photo archive at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

12.15-12.30 Tom Allbeson & Bronwen Colquhoun
Picture Post installed & uploaded: Historicizing a mid-century photomagazine

12.30-12.45 Panel and Q&A

12.45-13.45 Break

Session 3 Moderated by Thomas Smits

13.45-14.00 Helen Lewandowski
'All the News That's Fit to Print': Analysing everyday photography in The New York Times, 2000 to 2020

14.00-14.15 Nanne van Noord
Computational Methods for Iconic Image Analysis

14.15-14.30 Lauren Tilton
Photogrammar: From the Iconic to the Whole

14.30-4.45 Panel and Q&A

14.45-15.15 Break

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Session 4 **Moderated by Hans Rooseboom**

15.15-15.30 Thierry Gervais & Vincent Lavoie

Facing Black Star; From a corporate press agency to a public cultural institution.

15.30-15.45 Durkje van der Wal

The A.B.C. Press Archive and Imre Rona: Inspirator of Dutch photojournalism, 1931-1974

15.45-16.00 Nadya Bair

Mapping the Decisive Network: European Magazines and the Magnum Photos Archive

16.00-16.15 Panel and Q&A

16.15-16.30 Short break

Session 5 **Moderated by Thomas Smits**

16.30-16.45 Melvin Wevers & Nico Vriend

What to do with 2.000.000 press photos? The challenges and opportunities of applying computer vision to a digitized press photo collection

16.45-17.00 Jenny Hottle & Will Davis

Making 125 Years of Images Findable

17.00-17.15 Panel and Q&A

17.15 End of symposium

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ABSTRACTS PRESENTATIONS

(in order of presentation)

Elwin Hendrikse, Photographic Collections Specialist, Nationaal Archief / Dutch National Archives
Documenting The New Nation: Henri Cartier-Bresson in Indonesia

From December 1947 until November 1950 photographer and photojournalist Henri Cartier-Bresson travelled through Asia as a reporter for the newly established photo agency Magnum Photos. During this time the political map of Asia was drastically changing. Growing independence movements led to widespread decolonization that caused the retreat of the old European powers and the emergence of new nation-states. One of Cartier-Bresson's goals was to document the Indonesian independence. His photographs of one of the most crucial periods in Indonesian

history in December 1949 have become iconic. However, at the time these historic images saw relatively little publication. In contrast, magazine editors welcomed enthusiastically his photographs of everyday Indonesian life and culture, which were not linked to news events. In this talk, I will take a closer look at Cartier-Bresson's series on Indonesia, its distribution a.o. in Dutch media, and at what information can be discerned from the prints in the ABC-Press archive.

Gaia Salvatori, Associate Professor of History of Contemporary Art, Università della Campania 'Luigi Vanvitelli', Caserta Italy

Photographs in print. Twentieth-Century Neapolitan Photojournalistic Archives: Production and Reception

The archives discussed in this paper are private photo agencies active in Naples for the most between the 1920s and 1940s, and relatively unknown at an international level. The enormous wealth of images still preserved in some of these archives, named after their founders (Beuf, Parisio, Troncone and Carbone), is now being indexed and digitized. These agencies worked for the major city newspapers (and not only), thus producing photographs to be printed and spread on a large scale.

During the same period many of these visual materials were used for artistic purposes, that is, as the source, or the inspiration of the drawn journalistic illustration. A case in point is the collection of photographs, newspapers and illustrated tables in the Matania archive. The analysis of the history and characteristics of these archives will focus on the particular places where they are stored and on the problematic aspects of their digitization.

Marie-Eve Bouillon, PhD Archives nationales, mission photographie

Archiving Le Monde's image practices (1980-2000) in the National Archives of France

In January 2020, the National Archives of France received a large archive from the photographic service of the newspaper Le Monde. Established in connection with the use of the photographic image within the newspaper between the 1980s

and the beginning of the 2000s, this set is employed both as a documentation of the image related publications, but also as a tool which allows a great reactivity adapted to the mediatic temporality. Through the accumulation of

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photographic prints and published documents (brochures, press clippings - also from competing newspapers - photocopies, advertisements, invitation cards, etc.) emerge both the visual representation that the newspaper wishes to associate to their handling of the news, as well

as the visual culture of the staff. When archiving this set, how can we adopt a forward-looking approach that makes it possible to preserve traces of the possible histories of image practices within the newspaper? This talk presents a reflection and a work in progress.

Regina Retter & Dr. Eva Kraus Research librarians at Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Department of Maps and Pictures

How to digitize 15 million press photos: The analogue STERN photo archive at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek

In 2019, the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek received the analogue photo archive of the journal STERN from the publishing house Gruner+Jahr. The journal STERN was one of the world's leading journals in the 1960s and 1970s in particular. Its photo archive is one of the most important documents of photo journalism on a worldwide scale. The collection contains around 15 million photographs, covering the period between 1948 and 2001. Digitizing this enormous corpus is, of course, a great challenge. The Bavarian State

Library is about to tackle it, starting the digitization process this autumn with the first lap of three million pictures. In our presentation will talk about the challenges of digitizing this huge stock of pictures. We will illuminate our solutions for dealing with heterogeneous documentation, legal questions and limited workforce. Furthermore, we will put forward our ideas of how to index and present the pictures in a new picture database.

Dr Tom Allbeson, Lecturer in Cultural History, Cardiff University

Dr Bronwen Colquhoun, Senior Curator of Photography, Amgueddfa Cymru, National Museum Wales

Picture Post installed & uploaded: Historicizing a mid-century photomagazine

This paper addresses how the popular British photo-magazine *Picture Post* (1938-57) and the archival holdings of the Hulton Archive (Getty Images) can be examined and exhibited in ways which explicate the social, cultural and material histories of mid-century photojournalism. *Picture Post* had a national audience, but an international genesis, production and outlook. Thousands of printed pages produced over two decades drew on work by staff photographers, major agencies and amateur snapshots. Although the Hulton archive comprises 80 million images, today just a

handful of familiar images from *Picture Post* are recirculated in print and online as visual shorthand for collective memories of British wartime and postwar experience. The central research question is therefore, what theoretical frameworks, research methods and modes of visualisation and display are required to examine and exhibit the vast corpora of images, documents and artefacts that represent the history of this popular magazine's production, circulation and consumption?

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Helen Lewandowski, PhD candidate, The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London

'All the News That's Fit to Print': Analysing everyday photography in The New York Times, 2000 to 2020

Over the past two decades, *The New York Times* has increasingly incorporated visual experimentation in their use of photography, employing art and design strategies for what were once more conventional editorial subjects. The long-held hierarchy between text and image has been disrupted, with images taking the lead. Employing quantitative and qualitative methods,

my study examines the *Times* through a dataset of 240 front pages from January 2000 to January 2020. This 'image-first' approach, however, is not reflected in its digital archive, and obstructions to 'reading' the image reflect a wider financialisation of culture that has equally intensified over the last two decades.

Nanne van Noord, Assistant Professor Cultural Multimedia Analysis

Computational Methods for Iconic Image Analysis

Archive digitisation has led to a tremendous increase in the size of digital collections. This increase has created new opportunities, and a need, for the usage of automatic analysis to deal with the richness and scale of these collections. The aim of computational methods research is to produce tools which support humans in their exploration and interpretation. Yet, there is a gap between how automatic tools and humans

interpret images. By focusing on Iconic Image analysis, as the use case for which this gap between interpretations is largest, I explore what can (and cannot) be done automatically. This exploration leads to conclusions about future directions for computational methods, centering around the incorporation of the pluralities of meanings and attention to, the temporality of visual content.

Lauren Tilton, Assistant Professor of Digital Humanities, University of Richmond (USA)

Photogrammar: From the Iconic to the Whole

There has been a significant commitment to digitization and preservation of photography collections over the last few decades. As a result, an entire world of visual culture from the exceptional to the everyday is increasingly a click away. Yet, how to convey the scope and scale of these collections remains a challenge. In this talk, I will discuss how data visualization and machine

learning can offer a wider angle and expand access and discovery of photography collections. The talk will focus on Photogrammar.org, a web-based digital public humanities platform for exploring the 170,000 photographs taken by the FSA and OWI agencies of the U.S. Federal Government between 1935 and 1943.

Drs. Durkje van der Wal, freelance researcher and curator

The A.B.C. Press Archive and Imre Rona: Inspirator of Dutch photojournalism, 1931-1974

For decades the Hungarian émigré Imre Rona (1902-1974) influenced numerous Dutch photographers with his journalistic ideas and played a crucial role in Dutch photojournalism.

After the war his photo agency ABC Press developed into the most important agency for foreign photography in the Netherlands. Iconic international photo reports ended up in the Dutch

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press through Rona's mediation, as did the photography by world-renowned photographers working for Magnum, Camera Press and Time Life, among others. In addition, Rona gave commissions to Dutch photographers. 3.000.000 prints and slides are kept in the National Archives in The Hague. This archive - preserved in its original context - as a thematically organized 'hands-on' archive can still

be 'read'. The remainder of the former ABC Press archive belongs to the collection of the Nederlands Fotomuseum, Rotterdam and consists of 13.000 negatives made by Dutch photographers. The entire collection shows the world history of the 20th century as seen through the eyes of the international press and documentary photographers.

Nadya Bair, Assistant Professor of Art History, Hamilton College

Mapping the Decisive Network: European Magazines and the Magnum Photos Archive

In *The Decisive Network: Magnum Photos and the Postwar Image Market* (2020), Nadya Bair draws on extensive archival research to unravel the mythologies surrounding the legendary Magnum Photos agency. One of these myths is that Magnum's success stemmed from the frequent publication of its images in *Life* – a magazine that still dominates photojournalism history. Yet Magnum's archive shows that European markets were hardly an afterthought for the international picture agency. This talk reconstructs the network

of sales agents and magazine editors who distributed, bought and published Magnum's pictures throughout postwar Europe. Magnum's archive offers a macro perspective on postwar publishing, allowing us to compare how multiple magazines worked in the late 1940s and 1950s. At the same time, Bair will discuss the challenges of researching Magnum's European picture sales and consider how digital and collaborative methods may further advance histories of photojournalism.

Thierry Gervais, PhD, Associate Professor / Graduate Program Director Associate, Film and Photography Preservation and Collection Management

Vincent Lavoie, PhD, Directeur, Centre de recherche sur le texte et l'imaginaire Figura/
Professeur titulaire, Département d'histoire de l'art, UQAM

Facing Black Star; From a corporate press agency to a public cultural institution.

Since its donation in 2005 to Ryerson University (Toronto), the Black Star Collection has provided an extraordinary opportunity for research but also a constant challenge for researchers. Although the original indexing of the collection was appropriate and efficient in the commercial environment of a press agency, this organization rarely responds to current researchers' methodological, epistemological, and political expectations pertaining to research in photographic archives. The materiality of the photographs in the collection represents another

research barrier: dispatched under varied themes, the prints reveal different crops and different tones, displaying versos rich with information or completely blank. Ultimately, the Black Star Collection contains a limited amount of ephemera to contextualize both the production and original use of the photographs. *Facing Black Star*, the next volume in the RIC Book series, will discuss this tension between research expectations and challenges raised by the displacement of the Black Star Collection from a corporate press agency to a public cultural institution.

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Melvin Wevers, Assistant Professor Digital History, Universiteit van Amsterdam

Nico Vriend, Project Manager Fotografisch Geheugen, Noord-Hollands Archief

What to do with 2.000.000 press photos? The challenges and opportunities of applying computer vision to a digitized press photo collection

In 1962, Dutch celebrity Ria Kuyken was attacked by a circus bear. Cees de Boer captured this moment, for which he was awarded both the World Press Photo and the Silver Camera (Zilveren Camera). This photo also popularized Fotopersbureau De Boer which Cees had founded in 1945. The importance of the collection lies not only in this landmark picture. More interesting is the scale of the collection, with approximately 2.000.000 photos taken of about 250.000 events in sixty years, accompanied by extensive metadata. Not only major nationwide events are represented, but also subjects of small scale, human interest, such as the shopkeeper around the corner. The complete collection will be digitized and published online in 2022. Our aim is not only the digitization and publication of all 2.000.000 photo negatives of Fotopersbureau De Boer but also to explore how artificial intelligence can

enrich this collection, benefiting both users of the archive and cultural historians studying historical photographs. One of our efforts focuses on scene detection, a method to detect the ‘scene’ represented in an image (Zhou et al, 2018). We will rely on transfer learning to adapt existing computer vision models to our collection and the needs of our users. Existing models can generate labels with high accuracy, however, these labels are ahistorical and more often than not irrelevant to our collection. We will label subsets of the images via crowdsourcing to train and improve existing models. As such, we can add labels relevant to our collection to the model, which are absent in existing models. In the presentation, we will highlight the opportunities and challenges of applying artificial intelligence to a collection of historical photographs.

William P. Davis, Assistant Editor

Jenny Hottle, Senior Product Designer

Making 125 Years of Images Findable

Photographs first appeared in *The New York Times* on Sept. 6, 1896 and have been an integral part of our journalism ever since. The *Times* has a vast archive of physical photos stored in hundreds of file cabinets. This archive has significant historical value — some of these photos can be found nowhere else in the world. The *Times* began a project in 2018 to digitize these images, to preserve them and make them more easily searchable and researchable. A card catalogue had been the only way to research the archive.

The backs of the images and the folders containing them have rich information that was not indexed in any form. We will review how we went about turning physical prints into searchable digital assets. We will dive into challenges with machine learning tools for image and text recognition, and will go over how we repurposed analog metadata for a digital search experience.